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KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER MINDS

BEFORE we consider how it is that we know other minds we must state what we mean by mind. We shall not attempt any exhaustive analysis of the nature of mind but simply endeavor to point out some distinguishing feature by which mind may be recognized as an object of knowledge. Excuse the dogmatic tone for the sake of brevity.

I

Mind has two aspects that should be clearly distinguished. In one aspect mind is that which is undergoing sensuous experience. In the other aspect mind is knowledge of experience other than that which it is now undergoing. Mind is not only conscious of current experience but also of experience which occurred under other spatial and causal conditions; also of experience which other minds have undergone. Hence knowledge of experience is a very different thing from the process of experience which the mind may undergo in a given time, place and causal situation. To experience, and to know the meaning of experience, which is knowledge, are two quite distinct things. Mind is that which knows the meaning of experience. The meaning of a given experience is that total unit of experience of which the given experience is a fragment.

It is possible to experience an object without knowledge of the object. This occurs when one hears a sound in the dark without knowing what it means, or sees a glint of light in the distance without understanding its significance or undergoes a stream of sensuous experience without interpreting it or retaining it in mind because of preoccupation with other matters. It is also possible to have knowledge of an object without experience of it, as when one is told what another mind has experienced, or when one infers the existence and character of an object which no one has ever experienced. Even in case of those objects which we say we have experienced, our knowledge ordinarily runs far beyond our experience, whether past or present. When I look at a chair, for instance, I say that I experience the chair. But what I actually experience is only a very few of those elements that go to make up the chair, namely, that color which belongs to the chair under these particular conditions of light, that shape which the chair displays when viewed from this angle, *etc.* I am able to know the chair only because my mind can supplement this immediate experience with the experience which was undergone in many other situations vastly different from the present one with respect to time, place and causal conditions. Also, in most cases, my

knowledge of the chair is further supplemented by knowledge gained from other minds, based upon orders of experience which have never befallen me.

So we must distinguish between: (1) experience as a process taking place at a certain time, within the bounds of a certain place and under certain causal conditions, one of which is a sensitive organism; and (2) experience as that which is known to have occurred, or known to be about to occur, or known to be that which would occur if certain temporal, spatial and causal conditions were provided. We shall ordinarily use the word experience to designate number (1), while knowledge will indicate number (2). The process of experience is limited to a certain time and place and to certain causal conditions; knowledge of that process is not limited to any particular time or place or causal conditions. Knowledge surmounts time, place and cause. Knowledge is the gathering up of experience into a region where the thief of time does not steal and where the moth and rust of place and cause do not corrupt. The unique characteristic of mind, which we wish to make plain, is precisely this: Mind is knowledge and hence is not limited by time, nor place nor cause.

Many objections might be raised to the statement that knowledge is super-spatial, super-temporal and super-causal. But we believe that all these objections arise from one or other of two misunderstandings. There is first the misunderstanding that arises from confusing experience and knowledge; second, there is the misunderstanding that arises from confusing knowledge with error. Let us take up these misunderstandings in order.

Experience and knowledge are confused because of the ambiguous character of consciousness. Consciousness is partly process of experience and partly knowledge. For the extrovert consciousness is chiefly experience; for the introvert it is chiefly knowledge, but it is always both to some degree. Because of this fact, whoever identifies mind with consciousness will confuse knowledge and experience. Consciousness, in so far as it consists of experience, is shaped by time, place and cause. In so far as it consists of knowledge it is independent of time, place and cause. But mind, as knowledge, is much more than consciousness. I know much more than that of which I am immediately conscious at this moment. Whatever may be one's theories of subconsciousness, knowledge is a word which refers to much else besides that which is at the focus of consciousness. Mind is that which includes all that a man knows. Mind as knowledge is not subject to the temporal, spatial and causal conditions of consciousness.

The second misunderstanding arose from confusing knowledge and error. Knowledge is truth. Erroneous knowledge is not knowledge at all. Error is subject to time, place and cause. Truth is not. Truth is that portion of reality which is known. Truth is not affected by time, place or cause; but there are three things which appear to be changes of truth. These three are: (1) true knowledge may cease and error take its place; (2) error may cease and knowledge take its place; (3) further knowledge may be added to that already known. In none of these cases is knowledge changed although lack of clear distinctions may lead one to think so. When knowledge ceases and error takes its place we have a diminution of mind, for mind is knowledge and where knowledge is not mind is not. It is true that we say a mind is in error. But mind in error is mind not by virtue of the error, but by virtue of whatsoever approximation to truth that mind may have; for mind may be more or less fully mind. Error itself is a word that refers to that which more or less remotely approximates truth. It is that which aims at truth. Mind is identical with that which knows. To know is to be identical with truth and truth transcends, by comprehending, time, place and cause. Hence mind is super-temporal, spatial and causal.

In case of error changed to truth, we have something which does not apply to our present position because error is not knowledge. Error is subject to time, place and cause and generally is error precisely because of that fact. But error is not knowledge, hence the case is beside the point.

In case of adding further truth to that already known there is no change of true knowledge. We have further knowledge added but no change in that already possessed. I may know a chair to have a certain color. When the character of the light is changed it reveals another color. My original knowledge is not changed. It is still true that under the conditions of light first prevailing, the chair bore a certain color and that truth can never be changed. Throughout all time it will be true that the chair in that particular situation bore that particular color.

So we conclude that mind, in so far as it consists of knowledge, has a timeless, spaceless, causeless mode of existence. Minds are associated with three levels of existence which may be called the physical, the organic and the rational. The process of experience appears at the organic level; but knowledge does not appear until we reach the rational level. Rationality is the ability to survey the experiences of other times and places and causal conditions than those in which the organism is now placed; the ability to survey the

experience undergone by other organisms; and finally the ability to reduce all these experiences to a single unity and know them all as one total object. This is knowledge. It is only at this level that mind is completely developed. Organisms experience, but they do not know. The physical and the organic are the foundations on which mind is builded, rather than mind itself.

To know other mind is to know not only a physical object, and not only an organism that experiences, but preëminently it means to know that which reasons, *i.e.*, that which surveys and unifies the experiences of different times, places and causal conditions into one timeless, placeless object of knowledge.

We do not pretend to have made an exhaustive statement of the nature of mind. We have simply stated those features of mind which it is necessary to have before us in order to deal with our real problem, which is how we know other minds.

II

The knowledge of an object, whether that object be a stick or a mind, is not immediately impressed upon the mind. An object is a certain order of experience; but one can never know an object if he knows nothing save the immediate experience. He must be able to know the order of experience in its totality, which means that he must know not only those elements which are now being experienced but also those which have been experienced and those which will be experienced in the future. To know the object which he is experiencing he must know what is that total unit of experience of which the immediate experience is but one small fraction. This total unit of experience is what we shall call the meaning of the immediate experience. To know a stick is to know the meaning of an immediate experience. To know another mind is also to know the meaning of an immediate experience.

Suppose I experience a strip of brownness against the side of yonder hill. What is the meaning of this brownness? Perhaps I say, at first, that it is a shadow on the ground. I then say that I have knowledge of a shadow. But I discover that I am mistaken. I next conclude that it is a discoloration of the soil at that point. Then I opine it is a snake. No, it is some dried leaves. Finally I ascertain it is a stick. This I do by the simple process of putting myself in those situations in which I shall have other experiences related to the original experience in such manner as to reveal to me what would be that total order of experience which would ensue if I placed myself in all conventional situations relative to the original brownness. That order of experience is the stick.

But the immediate experience which means stick may also mean tree in so far as it is the fragment of a tree. It may also mean hurricane if it has been cast to the ground from a tree top by a hurricane. It may also mean fire and warmth if it can be used to kindle a fire. But most significant of all, it can also mean other mind. Let us illustrate this.

As I observe the stick I may note that it moves back and forth. It is the wind, I think, which causes it to sway. But suddenly to my surprise I may discover that the movements of the stick describe the signals of a code with which I am familiar. The stick is signaling a message to me which I understand. It is signaling the question: Do you know me? I am now sure that the stick means not only stick but also other mind. I approach and find that the stick projects above an embankment. I come nearer still and find that, lying behind the embankment, and holding one end of the stick, is my friend who laughs up at me and enjoys my surprise.

I say I see my friend beneath the embankment. But what do I experience? I actually experience certain sensuous qualities in a certain situation which have a dual meaning, just as the brownishness had a dual meaning. The brownishness meant stick and also other mind. These new sensuous qualities mean human organism and also other mind. Human organism is not necessarily mind any more than stick. If mind had expressed itself to me through certain kinds of sticks as commonly as it had expressed itself to me through human organism, I would recognize mind in the stick quite as readily as in the flesh. To be sure there are many reasons why human organism is better adapted to express mind than a stick. It is highly probable that our instincts are so adapted to the human organism that we are much more attentive to it than we can naturally be to sticks. Also the human organism, by reason of its capacity for vocalization and gesticulation of all sorts, is better adapted to the making of symbolic signs. But the principle still holds that human organism is not the criterion of other mind. Neither do we know other mind by reasoning on the analogy that since I am a human organism and also mind, that other human organism is likewise a mind. Neither do we know other mind by an instinct which recognizes a human organism as the embodiment of mind. There are, of course, instincts that cause human organisms to associate with one another. But association of human organisms does not necessarily involve mutual knowledge of minds.

It is symbolism that reveals other mind. The reason symbolism reveals other mind is because it reveals knowledge which is independent of the time, space and cause of the immediate situation;

and mind is precisely knowledge that is independent of the time, space and cause of the immediate situation. Symbolism surmounts time and space because it introduces into the immediate situation meanings which can not become objects of immediate experience except in situations which are far removed in time and place and cause from the immediate situation. Symbolism introduces us to a timeless, spaceless, causeless state of existence, or nullifies time, space and cause, by flooding the immediate situation with foreign meanings. When a symbolic object floods the present situation with foreign meanings it expresses that which transcends the present situation. That which transcends the temporal, spatial, causal conditions of the present situation is precisely mind. In so far as any object, through symbolism, reveals knowledge of that which is inaccessible to immediate experience, it reveals mind, because mind is knowledge of that which is inaccessible to immediate experience.

We said that the stick might mean tree, fire and hurricane as well as stick; and yet no other mind was involved. But in that case the stick symbolized the meanings of my own mind. The stick was simply the symbol by which I kept in consciousness, or brought to consciousness, that which I myself knew. Of course the stick might be a means by which I discovered further knowledge which I had not theretofore possessed, but in that case the stick would not be a symbol at all and we are now considering the stick only as a symbol. The symbolism of the stick always expresses mind, although it may be my own mind which it expresses. How one distinguishes between his own mind and that of others we shall consider at once.

That portion of all possible experience which each mind undergoes is different from that of any other mind. Differences in constitution of the organism, differences in the sense organs, differences in the time, location and causal conditions in which the organism is placed when the experience is undergone, all conspire to render the process of experience, which each mind undergoes, distinctly different from that of every other mind. Hence that knowledge which constitutes my mind is different from that which constitutes another mind. When I am introduced to knowledge, a timeless, spaceless totality, which is different from that which constitutes my own mind, I am aware of other mind. No objects are more readily distinguished from one another than minds because none are so different from one another. The complex diversities of those total systems of experience that make up minds are more different from one another than those fragments of experience which constitute non-mental objects. We know other minds in the

same fashion that we know our own and we know our own, oft-times, no better than we know other minds. The symbolism which floods the present situation with foreign meanings brings to our consciousness a mind. This mind may be either our own or another. Which it be is readily discerned.

Minds are constantly undergoing both mutual assimilation to one another and also diversification from one another. They assimilate one another in so far as they, by means of symbolism, communicate to one another that timeless, spaceless knowledge of experience which constitutes each. Thus minds comprehend one another. But they constantly diversify in so far as the process of experience which each undergoes is different.

So we conclude that to know other mind is to know a total order of experience which, as process of experience, underwent time, space and cause, but which, as knowledge, exists in a timeless, spaceless, causeless unity. Such a unified totality, transcending time and space, can make itself known as such to other mind by means of symbolism. Symbolism serves to flood the immediate situation with meanings which can be objects of immediate experience only at remotely distant times and places and under other causal conditions. Hence symbolism in a sense surmounts time, space and cause and reveals that knowledge transcending time, space and cause which is mind.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies. LIANG SHU-MING. Shanghai. 1922.¹

Those who are familiar with contemporary China know that there recently has happened something known as the "New Culture Movement." To those who fear nothing but change and those who, as Bertrand Russell said, take "moralization for philosophy," this movement is thought to mean the complete destruction of the ancient Chinese culture, and therefore is too radical. But, in fact, it means an evolution rather than a revolution of the Chinese culture. The "new" culture movement may be, after all, simply the self-consciousness and self-examination of the old. Mr. Liang's book is the first conscious and serious attempt to grasp the central

¹ The page numbers referred to in the following are based on a copy of the preliminary Peking edition. There is no English translation.